



Hindus Subject To Violent Mob Attacks": UN Body's Report On Bangladesh Violence



OHCHR investigators said they spoke to Hindu homeowners in these areas and recorded instances of "property destruction, arson, and physical threats".

A United Nations report into the violence that roiled Bangladesh in mid-2024 - student protests over job quotas forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to quit and flee Dhaka (to India) - has said Hindus were among members of minority communities "subject to violent attacks by mobs".

Hindus make up an estimated eight per cent of Bangladesh's 17 crore-population. These attacks, the report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said, included burning of homes and some attacks on places of worship. The attacks, the report said, came as Ms Hasina's government "lost control" and mobs in Dhaka and other parts, including Chittagong, "engaged in retaliatory killings and other serious revenge violence targeting". The UN agency said officials from Ms Hasina's Awami League and its supporters (real or perceived), as well as police, were among those with targets on their backs.

Hindus have "often been stereotypically associated with this political faction", the report said. The report also said the authorities were in "disarray" and "unable to provide an effective response to protect the human rights of these victims against abuses by non-state actors". The OHCHR had been invited by the current Bangladeshi administration - an interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Md Yunus - to conduct an independent and impartial fact-finding mission into the violence that raged between July 1 and August 15, 2024.

In December last year the Yunus administration acknowledged 88 cases of communal violence, mostly against Hindus, and said 70 people had been arrested in connection with those attacks.

This was after India, through Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, made strong remarks about ensuring the safety of minorities, including Hindus. The Bangladesh government had, till then, insisted that a few incidents aside, the attacks on Hindus were not linked to their faith.

Attacks on Hindu community members, including priests, and temples in Bangladesh made headlines last year. And the arrest of a Hindu priest - former International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON, leader, Chinmoy Krishna Das, who was last month denied bail, triggered more protests.

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According to the UN report, many of the attacks were from rural and historically tense areas like Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, and Dinajpur, as well as others like Sylhet, Khulna, and Rangpur.

Investigators said they spoke to Hindu homeowners in these areas and were told of "property destruction, arson, and physical threats". Bangladesh's early reactions to this (and the arrest of other Hindu priests and individuals) had been to call the entire matter an "internal affair" and dismiss India's concerns as "unfounded".

Meanwhile, in a disturbing conclusion, the agency said there are "reasonable grounds to believe the former government and its security and intelligence apparatus, with violent elements associated with the Awami League, systematically engaged in serious human rights violations".

READ | "1,400 Killed In 45 Days": UN On Sheikh Hasina Government These violations included extrajudicial killings, extensive arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and there are "reasonable grounds to believe these violations were carried out with the knowledge, coordination, and direction of political leadership and senior security officials, in pursuance of a strategy to suppress dissent..."

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